

REMARKS

Objections to Drawings

The Examiner objects to Fig. 2 as being not visible or legible enough to understand. A clearer copy of Fig. 2 is submitted herewith for the Examiner's approval, with a copy to the Official Draftsman.

The Examiner objects to Fig. 1 on the grounds that there is no text describing what is in the box labeled "A." Applicant notes that the contents of area A are shown in detail in Fig. 1A, as explained at p. 4, line 23 of Applicant's specification, and are discussed at, e.g., p. 5, lines 16-18, and p. 6, lines 9-18. Thus, Applicant submits that no text is required in Fig. 1.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

Independent claims 1, 44, 45 and 53, and related dependent claims, have been rejected as anticipated by Yarbrough. Applicant will discuss below why each of the independent claims is patentable over Yarbrough. The dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons.

Claim 1

Claim 1 requires, in pertinent part, "causing a liquid to pass from one surface of the web through small holes to another surface of the web by applying a vacuum to a surface of the web, and inspecting one of the surfaces of the web to detect liquid that has passed from another surface of the web through the small holes at the inspection surface." Yarbrough does not teach inspecting a surface of the web that is being tested. Instead, Yarbrough inspects the surface of an absorbent fibrous sheet 12 that is interposed between a vacuum source and the web.

Claim 44

Claim 44 requires "automatically inspecting an inspection surface of the web for stains caused by liquid having penetrated pinholes in the web," and thus is patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claim 45

Claim 45, as amended, requires:

"an applicator configured to dispense liquid onto a first surface of a moving web;

a vacuum port positioned to apply a vacuum to a second surface of the web below the first surface; and

downstream from the applicator and the vacuum port, a vision system aimed at the second surface and configured to detect liquid at the second surface.”

Thus, claim 45 requires a vision system aimed at the second surface of the web. To the extent that Yarbrough discloses a “vision system” (assuming *arguendo* that the electronic scanner 16 described by Yarbrough can be interpreted as a vision system, which is not conceded), Yarbrough aims this system at the absorbent fibrous sheet 12, not at the web that is being tested.

Claim 53

Claim 53 requires “while a web comprising a film is moving along a production line, automatically observing a surface of the web to identify liquid that has passed through the pinholes from another surface of the web.” Thus, claim 53 is patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102 be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Independent claim 43, and dependent claims 2, 4, 16-17, 19 and 33-34 have been rejected as obvious in view of Yarbrough combined with Poulsen, Mushaben and Gardner.

Like claim 1, claim 43 requires the inspection of a surface of a moving web. The remaining rejected claims depend from claim 1 and thus include the features of claim 1. These claims are patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with regard to claim 1.

As discussed above, Yarbrough does not teach or suggest inspecting the surface of a moving web. This deficiency is not remedied by the secondary references. Poulson measures the porosity of a sheet by measuring changes in air flow (see, e.g., Abstract). Mushaben (WO 00/06377) and Gardner (WO 99/54134) describe methods of manufacturing laminates. Although both Mushaben and Gardner view pinholes as undesirable, neither reference mentions how the laminates are tested for pinholes.

Dependent claims 22, 29, 38-39, 46, 47 and 48 have been rejected as obvious in view of Yarbrough combined with Poulsen and Grollimund or Mason.

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These claims are patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with respect to claims 1 and 45, from which they depend.